FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Volume 46, Number 2 April 1995

The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

From the Articles of Incorporation, 1950.

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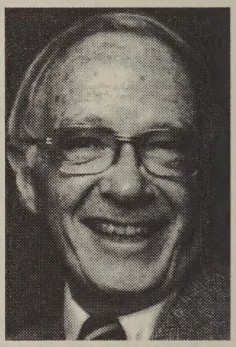
Cover photograph by Kay Danielson.



A group I belong to recites at every meeting a standard Buddhist precept that, in part, goes something like this:

> Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful or angry speech and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve them of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I vow to learn to speak with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I will make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

A while back, however, no sooner had those words been spoken than long-simmering antagonism between several participants broke out. Angry words and accusations were hurled, and the unresolved tensions, hurts and alienation continue to this day.

Clearly it's easier to talk the talk than to walk the walk. Well, we're all human, as the saying goes. I'm painfully aware that all too often black clouds of anger or pride, contempt or indifference to other's pain or suffering scud across the clear sky of my good intentions and result in hurtful speech that, intentionally or not, belittles or humiliates someone, injures their sense of self-esteem, or diminishes them in some way in their own or other's eyes.

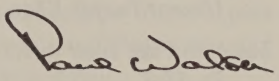
Having slipped off the path—how do we get back on and, better yet, stay on? It seems to me that one very valuable step might be to adopt, and take very seriously, the life-saving antidote to the poison of "unmindful speech" offered by AA. The instructions are very clear and specific: to be willing to make amends to anyone we harm, to make direct amends to them wherever possible; to continue to take personal inventory, and when we have wronged or hurt someone with our "unmindful" speech, to admit it.

Why should we do that? Apologizing tends to strike us as a sign of weakness. Two of my father's favorite expressions were "Never apologize, never explain," and "Don't do as I do, do as I say." The fact is that a genuine apology requires real strength of character and self-

esteem. It's not easy to admit fault, failure, and weakness and to act promptly to make amends when our speech or actions have been plain wrong. But when we lash out at somebody with hurtful and abusive words and don't "take it back," we not only poison our relationship with that person, we also poison the well of our own self-worth.

When we sincerely apologize, however—when we take back what we said, we embrace a golden opportunity to tap into our basic goodness, to purify and transform abuse into compassion—for ourselves as well as for the other person.

The result is to turn misery into happiness for you and for someone you might otherwise have for an enemy. One member of our group, speaking of the relief and healing she felt at putting down a heavy burden of anger, taught us again that when we water the seeds of joy, peace, and compassion in ourselves, the flower of loving kindness blooms and brightens the world all around us.



Paul Walsh

If God opens the door of understanding for you under the form of deprivation, deprivation itself becomes a gift.
Ibn 'Ata'

Now the Lord is with you in every alteration, performing an unimaginable work in you hour after hour. If only you knew, you would not withdraw from God, even for the moment of a wink. For the Lord does not withdraw from you at any time.
Al-Hallaj

In silent wonder, the wise see God as the life flaming in all creation.
Mundaka Upanishad

My thoughts I have sown on the soil of your mind
My love has penetrated your heart
My word I have put into your mouth
My light has illuminated your whole being
My work I have given into your hands.
Hazrat Inayat Khan

Taste and see how sweet is the Lord.
Ps. 33.8

If you go seeking along the Way,
Look carefully in front and behind,
And only then proceed!
Look at the travelers who have arrived at God's threshold.
Generation after generation have arrived together!
How do you know which road to take?
How can you know which one laeds to God's threshold?
For every single creature there is a particular entrance.
Yes, for each creature there is a singular road to God.
Sharafuddin Maneri

All creatures, all people are my friends.
Many parts of my soul
are intertwined with them,
But how can I share with them my light?
Rabbi Abraham Issac Kook

Even in the midst of the pain my body endures,
Without comfort of any kind,
I cannot say, still, that I am suffering,
For You make all things bearable,
And my joy is such that it cannot be imagined or expressed
Catherine of Genoa

Return To An Innocence: A Spiritual Journey

GARY JACINTO

Climbing a strenuous trail in the snow-capped Himalayas, this traveler with AIDS found a lost part of himself.

The sun reflected silver-white on the wings of the 737. Below, spreading into the hot, brown plain of India, was New Delhi. We followed the Ganges east; the river gave no relief to the endless beige. Far away to the north a thin band of green indicated the foothills of the Terai where a pass led to a protected mountain valley and our destination, Kathmandu.

I had lived with AIDS for two years and, having just turned 50, sought a sanctuary, the Annapurna Sanctuary, an alpine meadow surrounded by 8,000-meter peaks a hundred or so miles to the west of Kathmandu and a week's hike north into the Himalaya. As the Indian sub-continent slipped silently by, I remembered a friend's joke about my "going to the mountain." I wondered how different the man who went up would be from the one who came down.

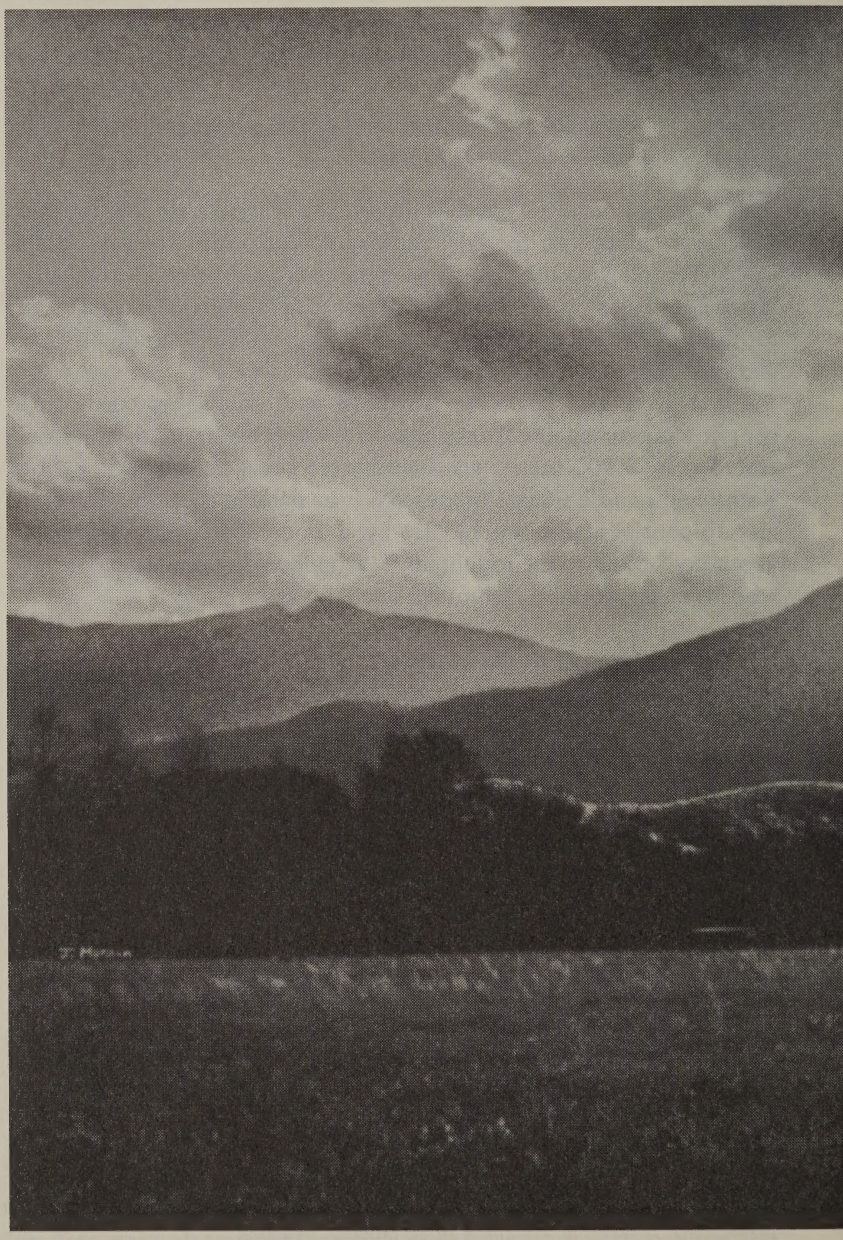
***

The taxi dropped us off at the trailhead on the new Chinese road to Jomosom, a village high in the Himalaya growing quickly into a town. We were three: Sharon, my sister, an experienced backpacker; Binod, our Nepalese guide/porter; and me, a New Yorker whose back had not felt a pack for twenty-five years. The trail was not immediately apparent, then I saw the rock stairs winding through the forest up the mountain. Peaceful, beautiful to the eye, they invited the traveler to pass this way. We began.

Within minutes my heart beat in my ears, breath came in gasps, my neck stiffened and my back ached. The pack seemed to gain weight as I stumbled from one step to another, all sense of coordination left below on the Chinese road.

A half hour later I came upon Sharon and Binod sitting on a rock, talking, waiting for me. I was in a panic, my mind a calliope of horrors. I doubted my ability to finish the trek and agonized about the damage I was doing to my already compromised health. When I re-

A member of a Unitarian Universalist community in New York City, Gary Jacinto incorporates elements of Buddhism in his spiritual practice.



John M. Morgan

gained my breath and a normal heartbeat Sharon said, "To climb a mountain is to discover your own pace, and simply move. Just listen; your body will tell you everything."

***

When my eyes opened the next morning, I saw sunlight sneaking between rocks resting on a lattice of wood which made up the guest house roof. After breakfast we packed and started our second day of walking. Far in the distance, capped in white, we saw the Himalayan peaks which formed the gateway to the Annapurna Sanctuary.

The trail was quite different from that of the infamous stairs. It was now a path, winding its way through terraced farms, forest and meadows, gently dipping here and there in its climb up the mountain. At one point, and quite suddenly, the path became a walkway of dressed stone—carefully placed and shaped flat fieldstone. There was a formality, a deliberateness about it as it graciously swept across the meadow into the woods beyond.

There was something strange about this path. It was out of place, as if it were not in its proper time. I felt as though I had walked this way before and then almost swooned with the shock of memory it rekindled from my youth.

The day was my graduation from junior high school thirty-six years earlier. I had entered William Land Park walking next to the carefully placed and shaped fieldstone curb. Excited and filled with the moment, I felt that all things seemed possible.

I stood transfixed on the stone walkway curving through that Nepalese meadow and in the blink of my eye saw the transformation of that young man to middle age. I experienced the loss of an innocence as it swept across my memory—an innocence which slipped away from me like the air slowly leaking from a poorly tied balloon—a loss which helped create the man who now stands under the straw Bermuda Crusher shading him from the brightness of this Nepalese morning. I felt the loss of hope and all the disappointments of those intervening years and understood the resignation that crept insidiously and slowly into my life. I also felt the pain, the desperation which now propelled me in my struggle with my AIDS. Fear had crept slowly into my life. It was not a fear of something, but rather a fear through which I experienced everything—so pervasive I did not even know it was there. It separated me from life and creation itself.

Only a second or two had gone by as I paused on the fieldstone path

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looking across the meadow this Nepalese morning. In the catharsis of those few seconds the accumulated fear of decades dissipated. The memories passed and were replaced by the exhilaration of possibility of that young man standing in that park thirty-six years earlier. I was innocently happy, filled with life. In this epiphany all things again became possible. A spiritual journey had begun.

***

The Moonlight Guest House at Landruk was situated below the crest of the ridge we had spent the last five hours crossing. As the woman who took my order for pumpkin pudding was in her garden seeking the pumpkin, I looked up to the gateway of the sanctuary which was now one day closer and I knew I would complete this journey. I was discovering my pace, a slow and easy gait which propelled me with minimum effort, and as I walked there was an increasing awareness—like a memory, an echo gently present—an awareness of being a part of something other than myself.

The clouds rushed up the valley to nestle among the Himalayan peaks as the woman discarded the seeds and began peeling the pumpkin. We were her only guests. She chopped the yellow pulp in small pieces, and with milk and sugar, slowly cooked the mixture over her wood fire. With the patience of one who knows no time she stirred the ingredients in the pot. The sun had cast long shadows up the river valley before her recipe was complete. Its rays brushed the snow white peaks a pale orange as I ate her pumpkin pudding; my gaze went back and forth from bowl to mountain.

***

Walking slower than Sharon and Binod, I was alone much of the time. Alone with this whispered echo calling me from my unconscious, a whisper evolving itself into consciousness. I found myself thanking trees for their roots which provided staircases on the steep trails. Literally saying, "Thank you, tree, for helping me." And to my walking stick, "Thank you, bamboo, for being my walking stick." The kind of stuff that on the streets of New York would get me a bed in Bellevue, but here in Nepal where the greeting *Namaste* means "I greet the divinity within you," my acknowledgements were both natural and profound.

I gained increasing appreciation of the moment—the texture of the path under my foot, the myriad colors in the bark of the rhododendron tree, the subtlety of taste in the simplest of foods. My percep-

tion of separation dissolved; no duality, only the moment. I came to understand that the whisper in my ear was my memory of my Divine creation, a calling myself back to my true nature.

We walked six more days—traversing ridges, down to river valleys, up and around again, only to find another valley, another river we needed to cross. The forest gave way to bamboo. Wet, tropical, the trail sometimes became like a small stream. We climbed above the tree line, and when we stopped on the fifth night we were in the sanctuary, a few hours from our destination.

> I gained an increasing appreciation of the moment—the texture of the path under my foot, the myriad colors in the bark of the rhododendron tree, the subtlety of taste in the simplest of foods.

The climb the next day was through a gently sloping meadow of yellow grass 15,000 feet in the Himalaya. The milky-blue water of a glacial stream flowed under a thin layer of ice, occasionally gurgling through. We were surrounded by some of the world's highest peaks. Excited, I walked up the meadow path; my breath came in increasingly short gasps in the thin air.

That night I lay awake and listened to the thunder of chunks of ice the size of railroad boxcars falling off the glacier next to our guest house. I got up, bundled in my down jacket against the cold, and walked outside. The clouds had disappeared to reveal a canopy of night sky atwinkle with what seemed a million stars. I stood gazing at the snow covered mountains in the light of an almost full moon and was filled with a sense of accomplishment. I had made it, done this thing, this adventure that some said I should not and could not do. The journey began in spite of my AIDS, but here in the sanctuary I knew it was accomplished with my AIDS as a companion. In my return to an innocence, I not only made peace with my fellow traveler but also discovered myself—a traveler in the arms of a Divine creator.

$54 t'ATLANTA

HOUND'S FASTER'N
WHEELS. MISSISSIPPI
FLOOD T'ST.LOUIS.
BRIDGES OUT. 5048
T'NASHVILLE'S OUT.
DEPOT'S WHERE
JESUS WAITS IN
BASEBALL CAPS N
STRAW COWBOY HATS
'N WAITS IN SHIRTS
TORN OFF HIS BACKS
'N WAITS IN ELEPHANTS —
GREY SMOKE TRUNKING
OUT OF CALLUSED
FINGERS 'N WAITS
ALL DAY, ALL NIGHT
HIS LIFE 'N $54
T'ATLANTA.

IN THE DEPOT,
THE BELOVED,
THOSE BELOVED
TO JESUS, WHERE
HE IS, SUFFER SO,
SUFFER SO, FACES,
BODIES SWEATED —
DOWN 'N OUT,
DOWN 'N . . .

O, BELOVED ONES
BELOVED ONES . . .

Tom Baer, who has a growing reputation as one of America's foremost new poets, sent us the following "bio": "The timing belt on Tom Baer's Yugo went in September; as of the moment, he has no car nor, for that matter, the money to pay his light bill ($89.59), the taxes on his house ($954.10), the sewer assessment. . .but he does have offprints of his plays, ($15. autographed), poetry, ($5. autographed), and the broadside, "$54 t'Atlanta" ($15. autographed and numbered)."

PNEUMONIA

Anna McKenzie
bakes bread at
Meade-Carillo
Elementary School
at 600 4th Street
from 7:30 a.m.
to 1:30 p.m.
Mon-Fri.

Deserted at 31;
mother, flower maker,
Winn-Dixie checkout clerk,
baker; at 53 Anna McKenzie
is exhausted, has had
pneumonia twice in
the last three years.

****

ALOE UP

Live in the
sea desert,
ragged dune
desert, torn
desert—palmetto,
liveoak, raccoon,
panther, coral
and, amid, Christ
building surfboards
and on the road
for ALOE UP
SUNCARE PRODUCTS. . .

And the loving
kindness of
the struggle:
the wee four
wee, the wee four.

CREATUREHOOD. . .
AT 70

She said
nothing of,
gestured
nothing of,
the massiveness,
the impossibility
of her body
any longer lending
itself to the
care of those
(arthritis, stroke,
Alzheimer's. . .)
she had, because
of need, given
herself over to
for the past ten
years. . .She didn't
implore Dee Halloran,
her landlady, rather,
amid the world of
creaturehood, cried
out within herself:
"My God, do you know
what I live on?. . ."

Mother Teresa and Sri Chinmoy: An Historic Meeting

VIDAGDHA BENNETT

Souls, hearts, minds and spirits came together when two of the world's great spiritual leaders met last October in Rome.

The Church of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome is hundreds of years old. And yet, in a city that is crowned with historical landmarks, it would perhaps have remained without special significance were it not for an unnoteworthy building by the side of the Church. It was here that the Camaldolite monks once had their chicken coop. It consists of a narrow, roofless corridor flanked by a number of tiny anterooms and opening onto a small courtyard. Today these humble quarters are home to the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, the order founded by Mother Teresa.

Late in the afternoon of October 1st, 1994, a group of friends and I waited in that bare courtyard. We had travelled from New York, Germany, France and England for this meeting with the tireless, sacrificing woman who has become known as "a living saint." The stone paving was damp from heavy downpours that had lasted almost the entire day, but now the rain had ceased and the unexpected, slanting rays of the sun transformed the scene. The sisters themselves used no electricity and so these last few hours of daylight were doubly precious.

A wooden door separated the sisters' cells from the courtyard and we gazed at it, hoping to see Mother Teresa emerge. From time to time, one of the sisters would come out, clad in the white, homespun sari by which the sisters are universally recognized. In 1948, when Mother Teresa left the Loreto Order in India and stepped outside the convent walls, it was this simple garment of the poor that she chose as her habit. She left the convent where she had spent twenty years of her life with only five rupees in her pocket and the blessings of the Pope.

Vidagdha Bennett is the author of Simplicity and Power: The Poetry of Sri Chinmoy, *the first full-length study of the writings of Sri Chinmoy. She grew up in Australia and received her Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Melbourne.*

Sri Chinmoy presents the U Thant Peace Award to Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa had received "a call within a call." As a young girl of eighteen, she had been called by God to serve in India. Then God asked her to serve the poorest of the poor by living among them and taking care of the sick and the dying, unwanted children and lepers. Within a few years, young women came to join her in her work and she opened her first "Home for the Dying" in Calcutta, as well as a children's home and a village where lepers might live and work with dignity.

Mother Teresa and her sisters feed and care for thousands of people every day—yet they rely solely on private donations to continue their work. They accept no government grants and permit no fundraising but, through the Grace of God, the work prospers. Mother Teresa has established more than 440 houses in different countries and, in a world where the Church faces steadily dwindling numbers of nuns and monks, Mother Teresa's order is overflowing with novices.

Today, at the age of eighty-four, Mother Teresa still shares the frugal life of her sisters uncompromisingly—despite a malfunctioning heart. It is said that in 1979 she arrived in Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize wearing a patched sari, sandals over her bare feet and

a handmade grey cardigan with a safety pin serving in place of a button. Because Mother Teresa is bent over with arthritis, she stands well under five feet tall. Her friend, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, once said about her, "She is very small, but there is nothing small about her."

And so in this atmosphere of sanctity we waited—and reflected. Some twenty minutes later, the wooden doors opened and Mother Teresa appeared. It is true, she is very small, but beneath the sari which she had draped over her head like a veil her eyes were bright and shining. In her motherly way, she was leading a special guest by the hand—an Indian gentleman of golden complexion, wearing the white cotton robes of his country. We immediately recognized Sri Chinmoy, the international peace advocate. He and Mother Teresa had spent the past twenty-five minutes closeted together in close, private consultation.

It was indeed a signal honor to be in the presence of two such beacons of spiritual light in today's world. It seemed remarkable that two Indian hearts should meet in Rome to exchange their philosophy—for as much as India is Sri Chinmoy's home by birth, it is Mother Teresa's by choice. Between them, they have had such a profound impact on our world. Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity have helped more than 150,000 people in 152 countries.* The main focus of her work, however, has been in India. Sri Chinmoy, on the other hand, has based his mission in the West. His service is directed towards those who are hungry for spiritual fulfillment. He has revealed many different paths to inner peace and he has encouraged people from all walks of life to pursue the goal of self-perfection.

One of his main purposes for meeting Mother Teresa was to present her with the U Thant Peace Award to honor her life of selfless dedication. After Mother Teresa received the beautiful plaque, she and Sri Chinmoy stood side by side under the Roman sun admiring each other's work.

"You have great love," Mother Teresa was saying as she clasped Sri Chinmoy's hands. "You are always doing something wonderful for God."

"You are the Mother of Compassion," he replied. "The entire world

*Since 1952 Mother Teresa and her co-workers have picked up over 65,000 dying people from the streets of Calcutta and cared for them at their home.—*Ed.*

has boundless gratitude to you. You have elevated the consciousness of the entire world. Mother, your Compassion is saving the world."

> [Mother Teresa] arrived in Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize wearing a patched sari, sandals over her bare feet, and a handmade grey cardigan with a safety pin serving in place of a button.

"Jesus has made it very clear to me," Mother Teresa continued, a radiant smile lighting her face. "Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to Me. That is why our work is so beautiful."

"Your work is beautiful because you are beautiful," Sri Chinmoy responded. "Your heart is a flower and [the poor] are receiving the fragrance of the flower."

Mother Teresa was listening keenly to his words. Casting her loving gaze over the entire group, she expanded on her favorite theme: "It is not how much we do but how much love we have in our hearts that is important. At the end of our life, when we die and go home to God, God will say, 'Come, enter into Heaven. Because I was hungry, you gave Me food; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was homeless and you sheltered Me; I was sick and you cared for Me.' This is what we are all trying to do. Please pray for us that we can continue to do God's work with great love."

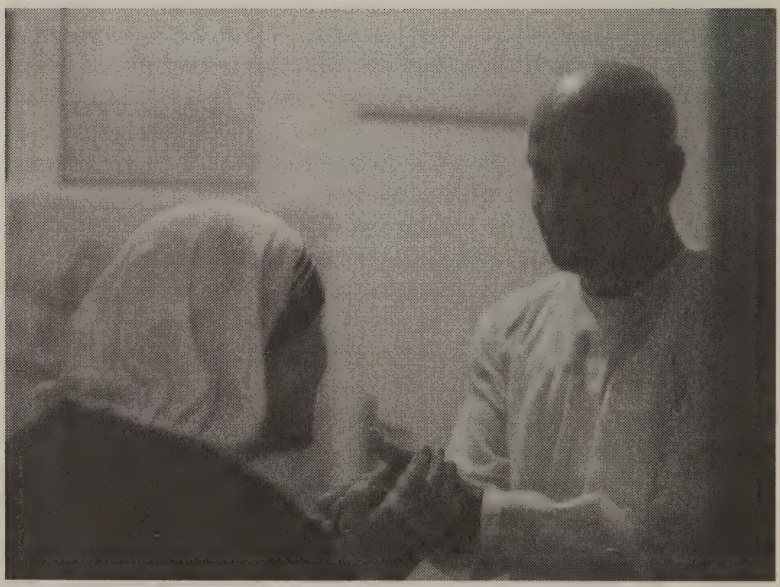
One of Mother Teresa's sisters appeared at her side holding a small pile of business cards. One by one, we passed before Mother Teresa and she handed a card to us. We saw that it was not a business card in the customary sense. Rather, it contained one of her prayers:

The fruit of Silence is Prayer.
The fruit of Prayer is Faith.
The fruit of Faith is Love.
The fruit of Love is Service
The fruit of Service is Peace.

As Sri Chinmoy looked down at the card in his palm, he uttered a cry of delight. Only a few days earlier, he had set that same prayer to music. Mother Teresa listened with rapt attention as a small choir brought her exquisite message to life. Profoundly moved, she said, "God bless you, Sri Chinmoy, and all your wonderful work for peace.

May we continue to work together and to share together, all for the glory of God and for the good of humanity."

The little courtyard gradually emptied of people; the sisters returned to their quarters and we to our respective countries. However, I do not think it can be said that a single person left the gathering unchanged. In our world of suffering, material and spiritual, there now shone before us two noble ideals: one, to care for the world and to dress its wounds, as Mother Teresa does tirelessly; the other, to transform the world from within, as Sri Chinmoy strives for endlessly.



Mother Teresa clasps the hands of Sri Chinmoy.

A Friend's Invitation

STEPHEN V. DOUGHTY

Please send the story of your own "transforming experience" to the Editor, Fellowship in Prayer 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. You need not be a professional writer.

We lay on our cots this eighth night at summer camp. Five of us were eleven years old. On the cot nearest the door lay Bill, our counselor. Two days before we had teased his age out of him. Nineteen. That sounded vastly old. Bill spoke as we all looked up into the darkness. "Say a prayer for Bruce," he said.

He said it softly, I recall. These were his last words of the night, a gentle invitation and, at the same time, a verbal tucking in. Lightening flickered in the distance. Thunder rolled, too far away to have sharp edges but deep enough to encompass the whole landscape over which it passed.

"Say a prayer for Bruce." Bill had not spoken again but his words hovered in my mind as if he had. So did the softness of his tone. I continued to look at the ceiling.

Bruce . . . and we were still working on this one . . . Bruce had been killed just nine hours earlier. We had all just settled in for rest hour after lunch. The sky had turned black. A terrible wind swept through and when we looked outside after ten minutes everything was covered with treetops. Treetops on our cabins. Treetops on the path to the ball field. Treetops obliterating the beach. Counselors hurried us out of the area and up to the dining hall where they kept us busy singing songs.

"Say a prayer for Bruce."

Bruce's cabin was just two cabins up Cub Row from mine. Late in the afternoon, when the counselors had let us back into the area, we saw what had happened. At least on the surface we saw. The biggest tree in all of camp had smashed through the entire length of cabin 20 and turned it inside out. We stood around and remarked on the splin-

An ordained Presbyterian minister and retreat director, Stephen Doughty is General Presbyter for Lake Michigan Presbytery, providing pastoral and administrative support for 70 congregations in Western Michigan. Among his books are Ministry of Love *and* Answering Love's Call.

tered boards. Aside from that, though, we really didn't think of any other possibilities on the matter.

After dinner, as we sat in the dining hall, the camp director had told us about Bruce. He told all 120 boys once, gently but very clearly. All 120 fell utterly silent. As we left the dining hall I saw one cabin mate of Bruce's leaning on his counselor and weeping.

The sky that greeted us after dinner had partially cleared, a brief dispersal of clouds between the terrible storm of the afternoon and the more distant rumblings that would come back that night. Under the direction of our counselors we began such cleanup efforts as we could. Then the rains had started up again. We got ready for bed and crawled under our mosquito netting.

"Say a prayer . . . " As I lay in the darkness it was now the softness of Bill's voice that worked its way into my mind at least as much as the invitation to pray. I stopped staring at the ceiling and closed my eyes. Images came into my mind. I had met Bruce on the train up to camp eight days before. It was a long ride from Chicago to northern Wisconsin. I knew one other boy on the train, but couldn't find him. Bruce and I met standing outside the lavatory. We had talked about baseball and about camping and about home. Two evenings ago we had run into each other at the waterfront and gone for a ride in a rowboat.

"Say a prayer for Bruce."

I really didn't quite know what that meant. My parents had taught me to pray, my mother especially. "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take . . . " But how now should I pray for Bruce?

I rolled over on my side. As I struggled with the immensity of what had happened, something in the echo of Bill's voice held me. I could not verbalize it then. Only years later would I be able to name what Bill conveyed. Quite simply, he had conveyed assurance. Amid our pain and bewilderment there arose now a gentle pointing. Bill reminded us, with his tone of voice as much as with his words, that even this moment was somehow embraced, that our yearnings, that we and Bruce and, yes, all those we missed back home were somehow received, attended to, cared for in ways that none of us could fully express.

As the rain continued on the roof I drank of Bill's assurance. "Say a prayer for Bruce." I took the gentle invitation and, dwelling on it, offered back my yearning. I then turned on my stomach and fell asleep.

Only later in the summer did I learn that Bill had been among those who found Bruce. And only later in the summer, when I would lash out at him in my own ongoing struggles with grief and rebellion, would I learn the fullness of his patience. "Bill's a snob and a terrible counselor!" "Bill, did you hear what Steve just said about you?" "Yes, I heard," came his answer, conveyed with a dash of honest hurt, but also with a forbearance that would not let me go.

It was Bill's patience, and the gradual dawning in my mind of what he himself had gone through, that gave added force to his assurance as it echoed through the summer nights. "Say a prayer for Bruce." When we all left camp at the end of August, he placed a firm arm about my shoulder. He had done the same thing on welcoming me to camp eight weeks before, only now the arm felt closer.

Some transforming experiences in life are swift. Others come gently and through time. Bill's gift to me was in the latter form. It came through his invitation that night, but also through his open, caring presence in the weeks that followed.

And his gift has continued with me now through many years. I was a boy when all this happened. Bill had just passed being a boy. For better than four decades, I have turned again and again to the lesson he offered that summer. Our sudden griefs are utterly real. Bill's invitation embraced that solid truth. Yet not even the fiercest and most bewildering events lie outside the sphere of our prayers, both those we speak and those that remain deeper than any words. I have learned that we need to lift in prayer our searing hurts, to lift our pains and our wonderings, to share these even while we still struggle and burn within. In time we shall receive the assurance, the persistent and gentle Arm across the shoulder of our aching spirits.

O God, I call upon thee by thy great truth, by the truth of the light of thy gracious countenance, the truth of thy mighty throne, by that greatness and majesty, beauty and splendor, power and authority of thine that uphold thy throne, and by the reality of thy Names, hidden and concealed, which none of thy creatures has pondered.

O God, I call upon thee by the Name that thou hast set upon the night that it became dark, and upon the day that it became light, upon the heavens that they spread forth, and upon the earth that it came to rest, upon the mountains that they stood, and upon the seas and valleys that they flow, upon the fountains that they rise and the clouds that they give rain.

from Prayers of the Naqshabandi Order, *14th century*

I am thirsting for your love, my Beloved!
I shall make this body a lamp, and my tender heart shall be its wick;
I shall fill it with the scented oil of my young love and burn it night and day at Your shrine, O Beloved!
For Your love I shall sacrifice all the wealth of my youth;
Your name shall be the crown of my head.
I am longing for You, O my Lord: for the season of the sowing has come; but You are not beside me.
Clouds gather on my brows and my eyes shed heavy showers.
My parents gave me to You, I have become Yours for ever; who but You can be my Lord?
This separation troubles my breast; make me Your own; make me perfect like You, O Lord of Perfection!

Mirabai

Now may every living thing, young or old, weak or strong, living near or far, known or unknown, living or departed or yet unborn, may every living thing be full of bliss.

The Buddha

In You, O living source, I lift up my soul's desire, and call with my desire to You, through the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jacob Boehme

Repeating God's Name

WILLIAM M. STEPHENS

Devout Hindus strive for spiritual discipline and concentration by reciting the name of God up to 100,000 times a day. On certain holy days, communities chant the Divine name for 24 hours — a million or more times. In this article, an attorney describes for Americans unaccustomed to eastern spirituality his own experiments with this ancient way of focussing attention.

Repeating the name of God is powerful medicine. Saints, sages and Masters have told us this for ages. As far back as Moses we were told to keep God's name before us constantly. In fact, God told Moses to repeat the First Commandment like a mantra. In Deuteronomy 6:5–9, we read:

> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. These words you shall never forget, sleeping or waking. If you sleep, you must dream of them; if you are awake, you must think of them, and recite them, and carry them into effect. These words you shall write on the threshold, and on the lintel, and on the wall, and in all the places where you shall be, that you may not forget what you must do there.

Long before Moses, the Hindus chanted God's name in mantras such as *Jai Ram, Sri Ram, Jai Jai Ram.* Earlier, in ancient Persia, the Zoroastrians intoned their names for God— "Ahuramazda" and "Yezdan." After Islam swept through the Middle East, the Sufis sang and chanted numerous variations of *Hu Allah Hu* and *Allah illaha.*

Mantras certainly produce results. However, the repetition of God's name alone, diluted by no other words, is considered by many great souls to be the pinnacle of spiritual practice—the high road to God. According to the great 19th century Perfect Master, Ramakrishna, the repetition of God's name brings one face to face with God Almighty.

Bill Stephens supplements his rigorous daily spiritual practice with frequent retreats at the Meher Baba Centers in Myrtle Beach, SC, and India. E-mail may be sent to him at HAPPY TRLS@aol.com. Regular mail may be addressed to him at PO Box 1026, Brentwood, TN 37024. He welcomes correspondence and will answer all letters.

Ramakrishna compares the process to finding treasure hidden in a sunken boat in the Ganges. Saying God's name is like following the anchor chain, link by link, to the treasure.

In Fourteenth century England the poet/mystic Richard Rolle was an advocate of this practice.

> "If you wish to be on good terms with God, and have God's Grace direct your life," he said, "then fix the name 'Jesus' so firmly in your heart that it never leaves your thought. And when you speak to Him, saying 'Jesu,' in your ear it will be joy, in your mouth, honey, and in your heart melody, because it will seem joy to you to hear that name, sweetness to speak it, and cheer and singing to think it."

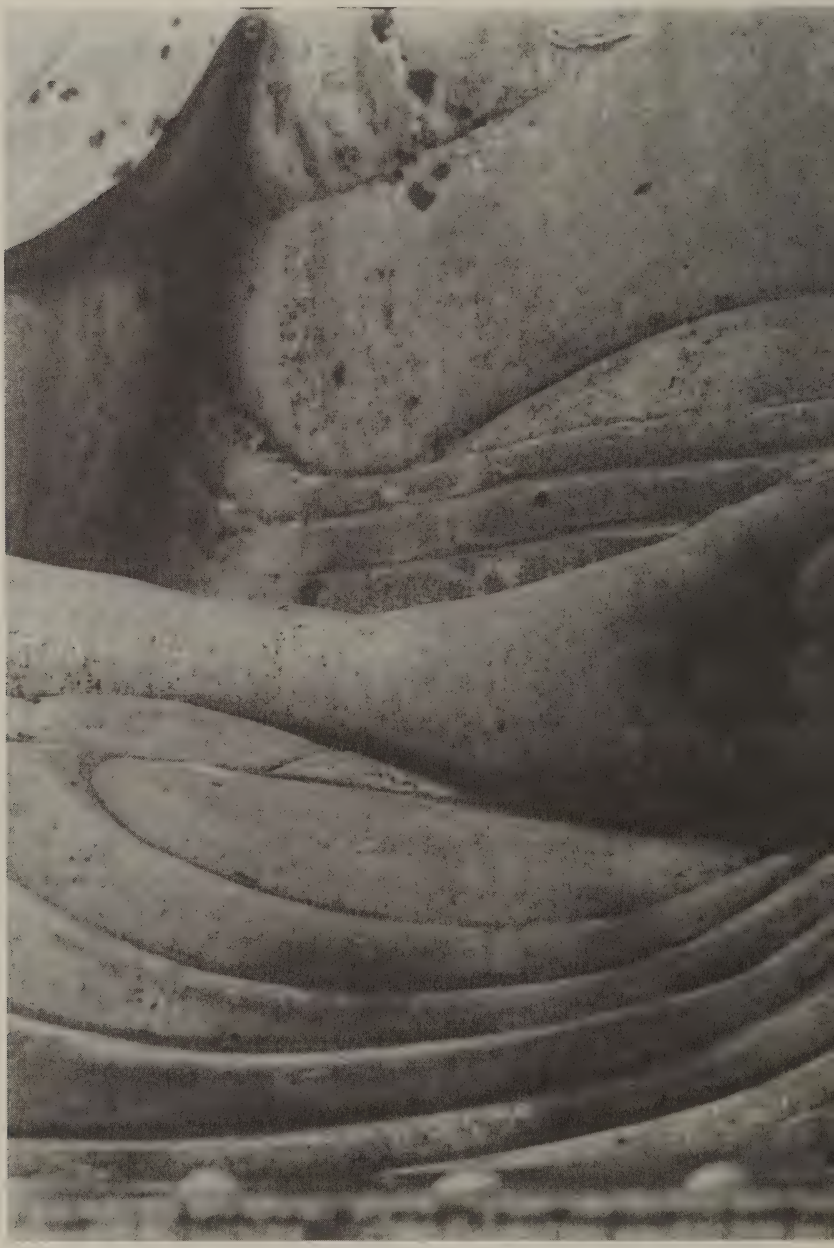
More recently, in this century, Avatar Meher Baba told his followers to constantly repeat any name of God, and this will awaken God in our hearts. Once God wakes up, Meher Baba added, God will remain awake for all time. Therefore, we should keep repeating God's name and give God no time to even doze.

Obviously, then, repeating God's name is a vital avenue to our own awakening. So why don't people talk about it more? Or is it so simple that we don't need to discuss it?

In 1969, when I first attempted to repeat God's name, I was intrigued by the idea that God would give us such a simple method to achieve the greatest prize in creation. It doesn't matter who we are or where we've been. It doesn't matter what kind of life we've led, and how many people we've hurt. Nothing in our past will bar our progress. All we have to do is keep saying God's name, and the precious Pearl of Divine Love is ours. Guaranteed.

Could that be possible? Could the unattainable be attained by such a simple method? If it's so simple, why isn't everybody doing it?

So I started trying to repeat God's name on a regular basis. The name I chose was Baba, for the reason that Meher Baba (which means Compassionate Father), came into my life like a whirlwind and changed me overnight from a dedicated agnostic to a love of God. So I started saying "Baba, Baba, Baba. . ." Only a few hundred repetitions at a time to start with. My wife, Peggy, and I lived at Key Biscayne, near Miami, seven miles from the mainland by way of causeway and bridges. I developed a habit of saying Baba's name 700 times while driving from the island to the mainland. While taking my morning walk by the ocean, I would say Baba's name in time to the rhythm of my footsteps.



Tom Dunham

When I meditated on the setting sun in a secluded spot by the water, I repeated Baba's name.

According to the great 19th century Perfect Master, Ramakrishna, the repetition of God's name brings one face to face with God.

From the beginning, the repetitions of my Beloved's name were mostly silent, but occasionally, when alone, I chanted audibly. On the beach at dawn, I often felt the urge to shout "Meher Baba" to the wind and sky.

Meher Baba has told us that if we take his name at the moment of death, we will be liberated. He added that we should practice repeating his name so we won't forget to do so at the critical time. That is reason enough for me to keep remembering Meher Baba and saying his name.

During the 1970s my repetitions acquired new meaning after I read the wonderful little classic, *The Way of a Pilgrim*. It is the spiritual autobiography of a crippled seeker who walked over Russia living mostly on his love for God as he constantly repeated the Jesus Prayer (Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me). By the grace of God, this penniless itinerant (whose name never appears in his journal), was inspired to write down his inner and outer adventures as he wandered, sleeping in forests or wherever he happened to be, encountering wild beasts, human beasts, and other lovers of God. The Prayer was his beacon, and it led him through varied and exciting experiences. To me he seemed a "perfect seeker", relying wholly and solely on love for God, just as Meher Baba and a handful of disciples did, a century later, during Baba's "New Life" wanderings.

The Pilgrim tells us how he learned to move the Prayer from his head to his heart, and to synchronize the words with his heartbeats. He tells fascinating tales of lives being transformed by Prayer—just as the lives of lovers of God today are perhaps being purged and rebuilt through our practicing the presence of God and chanting God's name.

In the early eighties I made a serious effort to repeat Baba's name on a sustained basis each day, and to keep count of the repetitions. The inspiration for counting came from two sources— Kaikobad (a spiritually advanced disciple of Meher Baba who repeated Baba's name 100,000 times a day) and the Pilgrim. I have no idea how Kaikobad kept count of the number of "Babas" he was saying; but the system I

used worked very well, although I never got anywhere near 100,000 repetitions a day.

I begin by visualizing Meher Baba seated in a comfortable chair. He is barefooted, and his feet rest on a pillow just in front of me. Baba's hands are together, palm to palm, in the familiar *Namaste* position. I am bowing before Baba, and I touch (with my fingers), each of his toes and fingers as I repeat his name seven times for each toe and each finger.

I start with Baba's right foot, first touching the little toe as I repeat "Baba" seven times; then proceeding counterclockwise, I touch each toe and each finger. In making my first counter-clockwise circuit of Baba's 20 toes and fingers, I say Baba's name 140 times. Then I reverse the circuit and return in a clockwise direction, beginning at the little finger on Baba's right hand, and ending where I began, at the little toe on the right foot. At that point I have made one complete circuit and return, and have said Baba's name 280 times.

> You may realize suddenly that without any conscious intention, God's name is being repeated in your awareness.

So I start my second circuit, and just as I begin it, Baba accommodatingly lifts the next-to-smallest toe on his right foot and holds it up for this entire circuit. This is to help me remember where I am—that is, which circuit I am on. This becomes important after the repetitions get into the thousands. This little aid keeps me from getting lost or confused if I am interrupted and I need to go back to the place where I left off. As long as I can see in my mind's eye which toe or which finger is raised or bent, I know precisely which circuit I was on. As to which direction I was going, this is determined by a slight inclination of the digit involved toward the direction I was going.

As I said, one simple complete circuit means 280 repetitions. Therefore a super-circuit, which means 20 circuits (one circuit for each toe and each finger) consists of 5600 repetitions; and 20 super-circuits would amount to 112,000 repetitions, for anyone who has the will to go for it.

At first it may seem complicated, but it is really quite simple. The counting, I mean. But the process of sustaining high volume repetitions is definitely not easy to do; and the most I have ever achieved

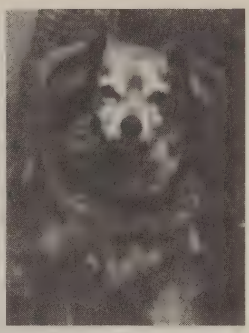
in one day is about 45,000 repetitions. Counted repetitions, that is. One of the beauties of this exercise is that you are likely to achieve literally thousands of bonus repetitions through mental lapses, and attempts to make corrections without cheating. Most of the bonus repetitions are presumably activated by the subconscious, which takes a liking to this little game and gives you sweet rewards when you are at the point of mental exhaustion and ready to chuck it all as a lost cause. At such a time you stop trying; and as you float on a cloud of blissful relief, you realize the repetitions are still going on, and you are not consciously doing it.

From my experience, high volume repetitions are, in the beginning, very exhausting and difficult. But at times, the process is blissful—like a mountain stream flowing over a rock. Also, there are rare and indescribable moments when the image of Meher Baba seems to come alive and I feel I am actually in his presence, touching his hands while his luminous eyes watch me silently.

Perhaps the most positive result is the addiction that develops; an addiction that brings only benefits and no detriments, and which no one would ever try to kick. This addiction does not demand attention when you have other work to do. While you are concentrating on daily tasks, this addiction remains quietly dormant, drifting just below the surface. But when work is finished, and you leave your office or take a break, you may realize suddenly that without any conscious intention, God's name is being repeated in your awareness. And it feels so good that you inwardly thank your Beloved for allowing you to experience such joy.

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN



Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08540, and she will answer you in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

Recently I have had to nurse an unwell family member. Among other duties such as administering medication and general cleaning up, it all seems to go on without end. I'm not cut out for this. It's beginning to get to me. I've even started getting snippy with the patient. Can you help?

Sincerely,
The Nurse

Dear Nurse,

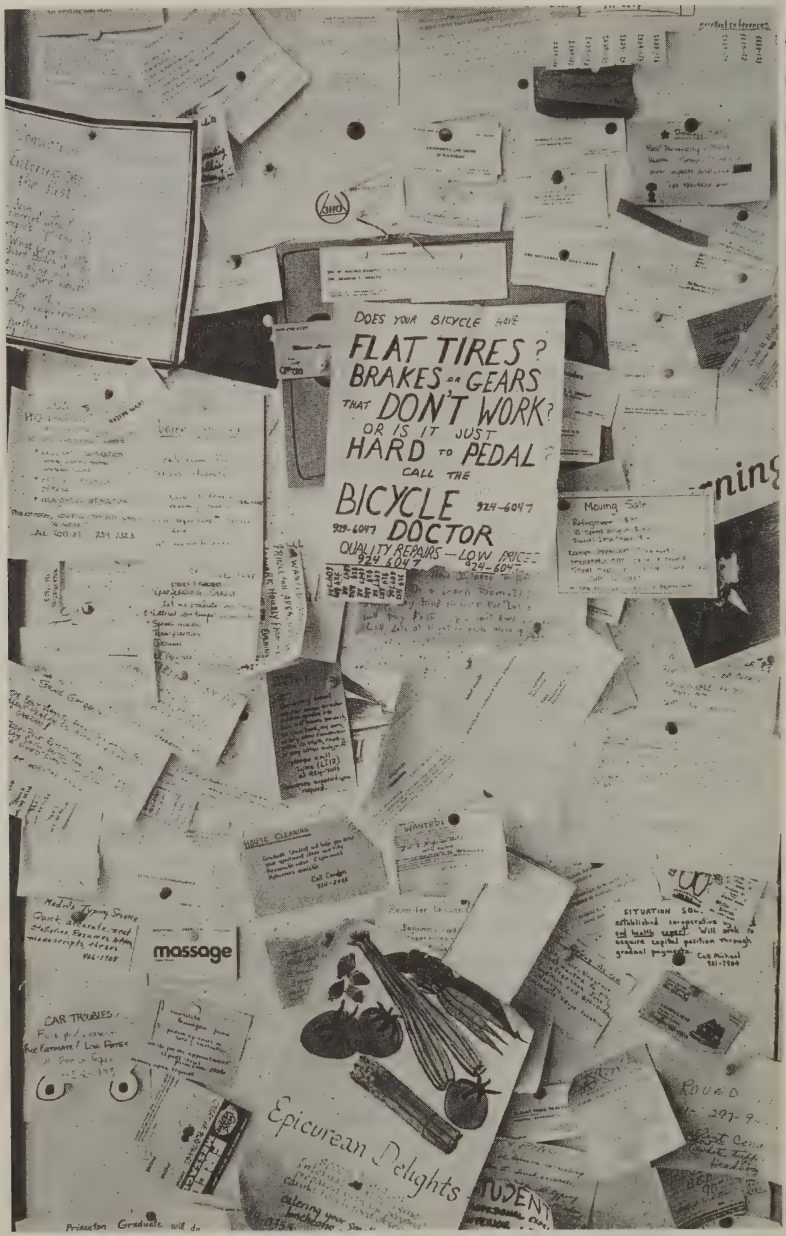
Thank you for the opportunity that your question has given me to speak about this important topic. It seems that there are lots of souls out there who are nursing out of necessity and feel a bit out of their leagues.

From my own personal experience as a nurse, I can say that there is enormous healing power to be had in the simple sit-beside and being—with. In my long nursing career, I have been a fine companion and comforter to my beloveds through their illnesses by using the simple, unadorned sit-beside or lie-beside. I've been a good nurse even though I never did master making toast.

Illness is no picnic for anyone. Very often, all the sympathy goes to the ill one, leaving the nurses with none. While the ill soul gets cards, calls, meals, visits, and concern, many times it's the nurses who could use a call, or a card. Illness is a time when life asks us to rise to the occasion whether we want to or not, even if we don't know how.

Illness may be an opportunity for growth and an opportunity to exercise some loving kindness. Despite the demands that illness places on the nurses, there is something positive to be said for anyone who makes themself useful to someone else in need.

The nursing chores may be relentless, but it can be downright scary


DOES YOUR BICYCLE HAVE
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CAR TROUBLES

Tom Dunham

to have to nurse someone and not have the necessary know-how to do the job. Worrying about your own nursing skills and the welfare of the one who is sick can sap much-needed energy away from the tasks to be done. For example, your own worry keeps you up pacing during the night, and the sound of your toenails clicking against the hardwood floor awakens the patient. My advice: obtain expert advice early, and follow it. Even if improvement isn't immediate, a nurse can gain some peace of mind by following a plan of action set down by someone knowledgeable.

Sometimes illness finds us without the proper equipment to carry out the expert advice, as in the case of a nurse administering a pink liquid medication with a tablespoon to a canine friend of mine. Both canine and nurse were soon wearing the pink medication. Of course, there was pink medicine all over the wall-to-wall carpeting. My advice: when you are a nurse, find out the easiest way to do stuff and buy the equipment you need to make it easy immediately. Roll up the rugs, put down newspaper, see whether medicine comes in pills, or by a syringe or a turkey baster or conceal it in liverwurst. Give yourself a break. And forgive yourself for doing it the hard way when the easier way would have been just as good but saved you energy. After you have the advice, the equipment, and have found out how to administer to the ill person, it is time to build a support team—get a back-up team of caregivers—helpers who can give you some time away for yourself. Also, some help with the chores, or rides to the doctor, or folks to help with errands, or just friends who will share some Cheerios with you and let you get it all out of your system.

For those nurses out there whose duties basically include the preparation of tea, toast, and soup, there is good news. This will pass. Look upon your nursing time as answering the call to your beloved's need to be close to you and their need for some rest and coziness.

Illness may be an opportunity for growth and an opportunity to exercise some loving kindness.

By your care, you are providing them a safe place to slow down their lives, and to curl up and let go—to be taken care of a bit. Your nursing care is your gift to them. Remember you are the unsung heroes and heroines. Nurses play a vital role in the recovery of the patient.

The nurse creates the loving and safe environment where healing can occur. And it's not all expertise—many times, it can be simple things that bring the most meaning.

During my own brief illness a few years ago, my nursing staff was attuned to my needs and wants. They rubbed my chest often, but then let me be. I had some lap-sits with my buddy, but they were not overdone. My nurses knew I wasn't able to seek the solitude of the basement on my own, so they brought the solitude of the basement to me, complete with the warmth and nourishment of the kitchen. I can strongly suggest the healing power of a sick bed in the kitchen right next to the heating vent. I can also testify to the soothing power of dainty portions of 1) chicken; 2) macaroni and cheese sauce; or 3) liverwurst.

To all nurses out there, I salute your courage, energy, and patience and your willingness to do the work when you feel that you cannot do it one more hour. Forgive the patient for being ill, and forgive yourself for being angry about it. Find out what to do, get what you need to do it, and get some help doing it. Get a friend to go out for a walk with you so you're not feeling so housebound yourself.

In addition to this, you may want to add a small prayer asking for a full and speedy recovery, the strength to keep on doing nurse duty, and praying too for a well-earned romp in a mud puddle or a curl-up with a good blanket by the dryer in the basement, the minute this nursing thing is over.

Wishing you all good health and good care, if necessary.

Faithfully,
Angela

Four Ways to Make Peace

ELISE HARVEY

A chance meeting at the age of 18 inspires a life of selfgiving.

In 1956, when I was 18 years old, I met "Peace Pilgrim"* for the first time. I wanted to go with her walking and talking about peace, but she said "No, you have to do your *own* thing"!

When Peace Pilgrim's book was published, I began giving away copies and gathering people together to talk about her and her peacemaking. I've been doing this for the past ten years, in different places around the country. I guess I have become a pilgrim for peace myself.

There are many ways of making peace. One of my favorite ways is to fold origami "Peace Cranes," small birds made of paper. I have taught hundreds and hundreds of children how to fold them out of squares of paper. When possible, we use recycled paper, such as seed catalogues and old magazines. There's a legend in Japan (where Origami originated), which says that folding 1000 cranes gives you your wish. The wish cannot be for something materialistic, but must be for the good of all.

Another way I make peace is by teaching people how to make compost. I believe that composting honors the Earth, feeds the Earth, makes peace with the Earth in a very practical way. In Vermont I took a course to become a "Master Composter," and now I teach the course in Michigan. I go back to Vermont summers to teach composting and come back to Michigan to teach it in the fall.

Another way I make peace is by singing while playing the autoharp (which I found when I was lost in the woods in West Virginia in 1975). When I came back to Michigan to visit my grandchildren on Earth Day '90, an old friend of mine was in the hospital in a coma with a brain

*"Peace Pilgrim" walked more than 25,000 miles in 30 years, crisscrossing the United States, talking about peace. "I shall remain a wonderer until (humankind) has learned the ways of peace," she once said.—*Ed.*

Elise Harvey is a Fellowship in Prayer *reader who works and prays for peace in Lansing, MI.*

Tom Dunham

tumor. I brought the autoharp in to his room and sang to him every day for two months. Then he went home.

By then, I was hooked on going to the hospital every day. It's such a great excuse for ME to sing to MYSELF as well. I asked to meet a pediatrician, because what I thought I wanted to do was to fold peace cranes with the children. The doctor didn't even hear my request to fold. He saw my autoharp and absolutely melted. With one of the sweetest smiles I can remember, he pleaded with me: "If you could sing to the children . . ."

So I began going into his department of Pediatric Intensive Care every day of the week. He would give me the names of the three or four children he felt could benefit the most from singing. I did this for over two years, for several hours every day. Then, after three of my favorite little ones died, one after the other in a row, I went to Vermont, to clear my head and my heart. I was invited to do compost education in the Green Mountains.

I appreciate what a friend said: "I understand that death is a beautiful liberation into a freer life." I, too, have believed that for a long time, and yet I felt sadness in "losing" all those dear little friends to

cancer. I think it is the sadness that kept me from singing daily at the hospital.

Now I go two evenings a week to sing to the children of "Ele's Place: A Center for Grieving Children." Someone has died in the family of each of the 100 children who come there. I sing to them, for them, and with them, and sometimes fold peace cranes.

Another way I make peace is as Secretary of the Board of the Peace Education Center in East Lansing. We are beginning to establish a Nonviolent Conflict Resolution Center within our Peace Center. We have been giving classes on Conflict Resolution for 10 weeks now, and I taught a class on Peace Pilgrim. We hope to establish a strong magnet to draw people in for learning ways of resolving conflicts without violence.

Peace Pilgrim has passed away, but I am sure she is chuckling over this by now. I can almost hear her saying, "Well, Elise, you did discover what your 'own thing' is."

Yes.

Thank you, Peace Pilgrim.

To All Who Have Sent Us Prayers

Thank you! We have read and given each and every one of your offerings to the editor of our upcoming book of prayers. You may be certain that your prayers were received with gratitude and deep appreciation of their personal meaning and value to you and to all who have prayed them.

Being Crippled Is No Handicap

BUDDY ARNOLD

Confined to a wheelchair, a writer disabled by cerebral palsy has persevered in his chosen field for almost half a century.

As a disabled writer for almost 45 years I have often been asked how and why. Some people think it is easy to write. All you have to do is sit down and write. John Harold, a writer himself, told me writing was the hardest work one can do. That was many years ago. Without God, writing is too hard; with God, the work is achieved. Nothing is too hard when you use it to express your faith. Whatever you write, you must express the better self within you. To me, that is Jesus.

"You are disabled," people say: "How can you do it?" I am a man who knows that one cannot write without deep discernment, deep desire, and a great commitment to prayer and meditation. You do not just sit down and write. You must be able to reach out and touch the mind of God.

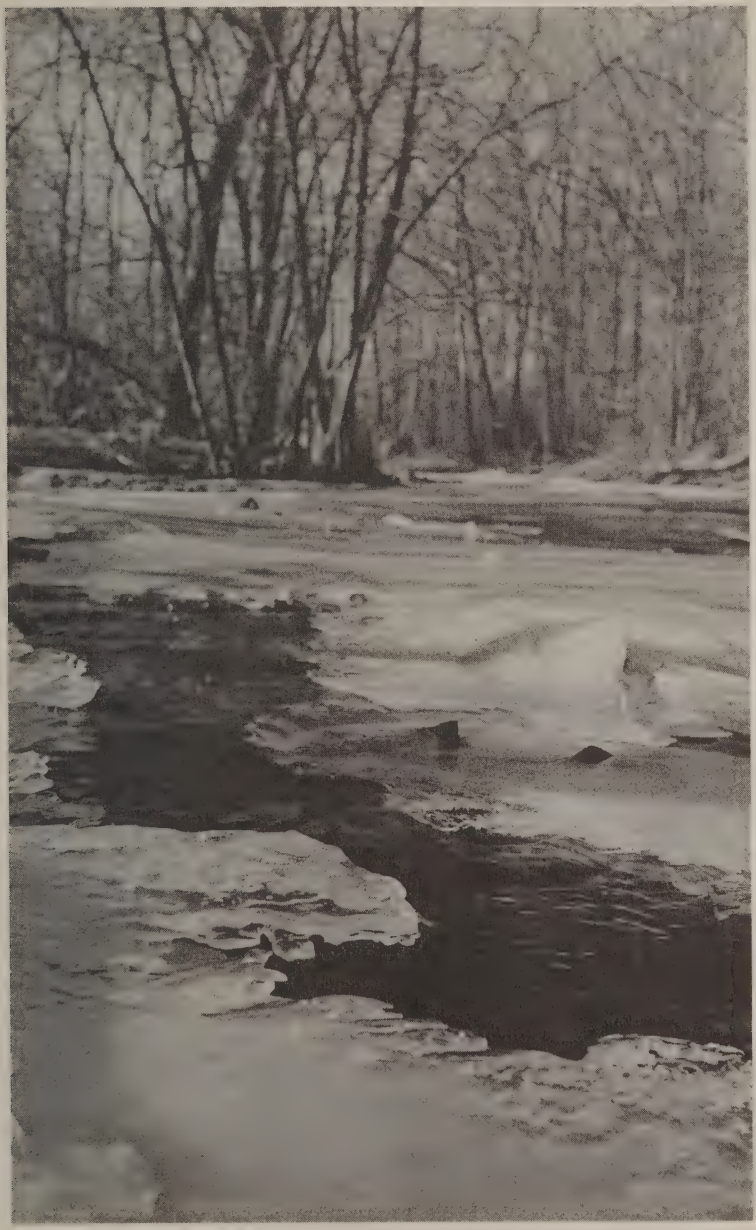
Being handicapped with cerebral palsy has given me a cross to bear in life that few can bear without knowing God. There is no real pain but just the constant knowledge that when you lift a hand or foot your whole body must move also. That is a blow to your ego when you are trying to meet with your peers. You feel strange, like an alien in the world—to say the least. Pain comes in many forms and this is one of them.

God helps! You learn to accept and to teach others. You learn to accept whatever the disease brings and you never give up! You must be willing to go with the flow. Each difficult experience you must undergo might be something to write about.

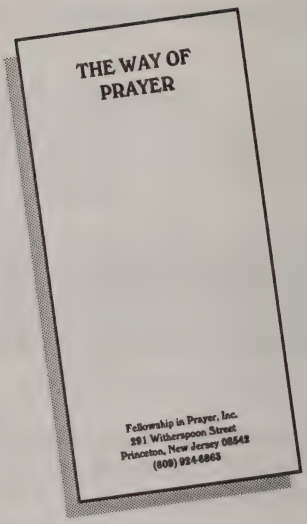
I write in the morning, never really knowing what I am going to say. I know bits and pieces of it but not the whole pattern. I ask Jesus to put the jigsaw puzzle together and low and behold I have an article or book written.

I read a lot. The newspaper is fulled to the brim with topics to write about. I ask God to help me pick the right issue.

Buddy Arnold resides in Sheldon, Iowa.



The Way of Prayer answers the questions of many readers who have asked us specific questions about prayer: When, where, and how to pray; what to pray for; what you can expect from prayer; how to form a prayer group.



Copies are $2.00 each. Now in its 3rd printing, *The Way of Prayer* has clearly filled a widely-felt need.

☐ Please send me _____ copies of *The Way of Prayer.* I enclose my check for $ _____.

* * * * * * *

What would you like to tell us about your spiritual needs, desires, experiences? About *Fellowship in Prayer*? Use the space below!

God of Weakness

JOHN R. WELSH

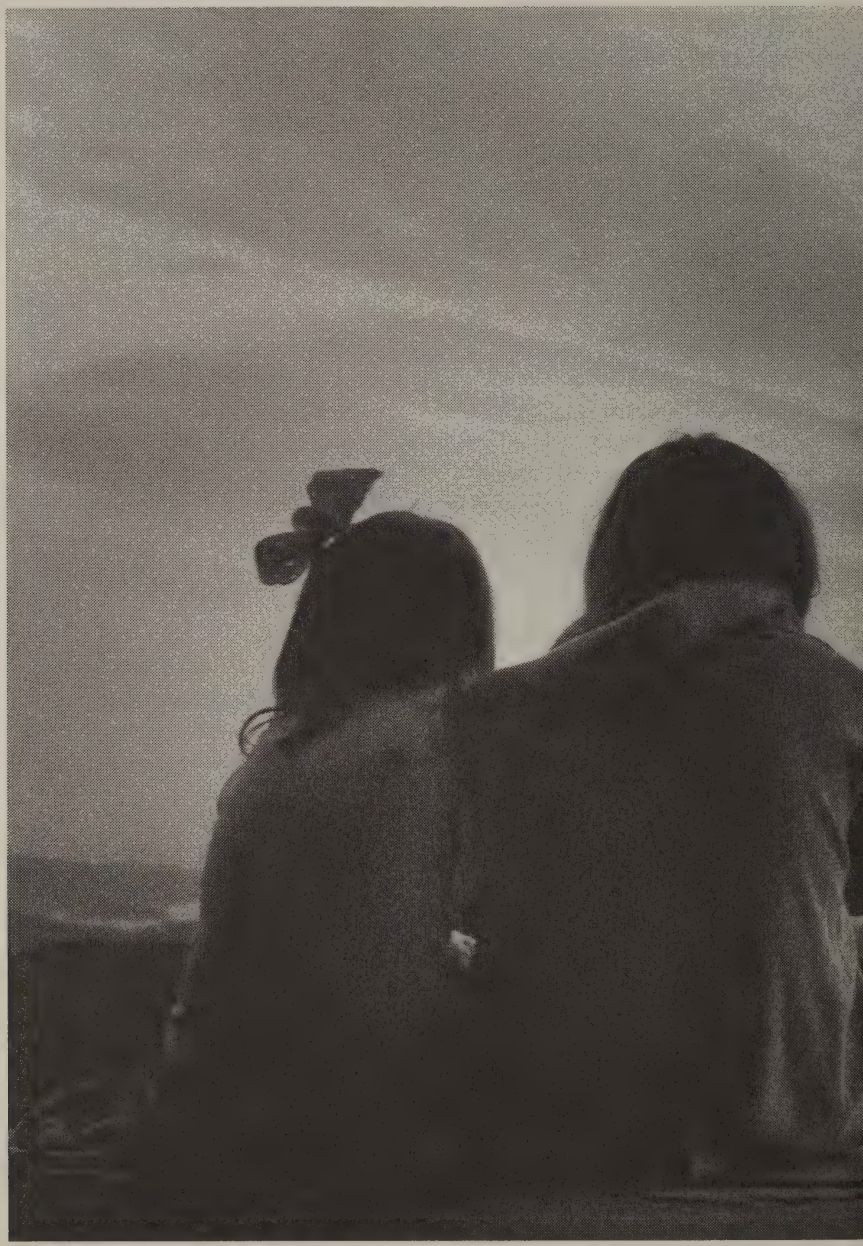
According to Dr. Ana Maria Rizzuto, the Boston psychoanalyst who conducted the landmark research on images of God, "We all arrive at kindergarten with an image of God in hand." Do these images tell us anything about the Divine reality at the heart of life? A priest ponders his own image of God and makes some fascinating observations.

"The image I have of God says more about me than it does about God." This was the reply I gave to a person who was making a retreat under my direction. Thinking later about this off-the-cuff remark led me to do some searching into the process of image-making about God. Maybe a way to say it is that my life experiences provide me with the lens through which I see what I call "reality" and what is deep inside this reality, what I call God.

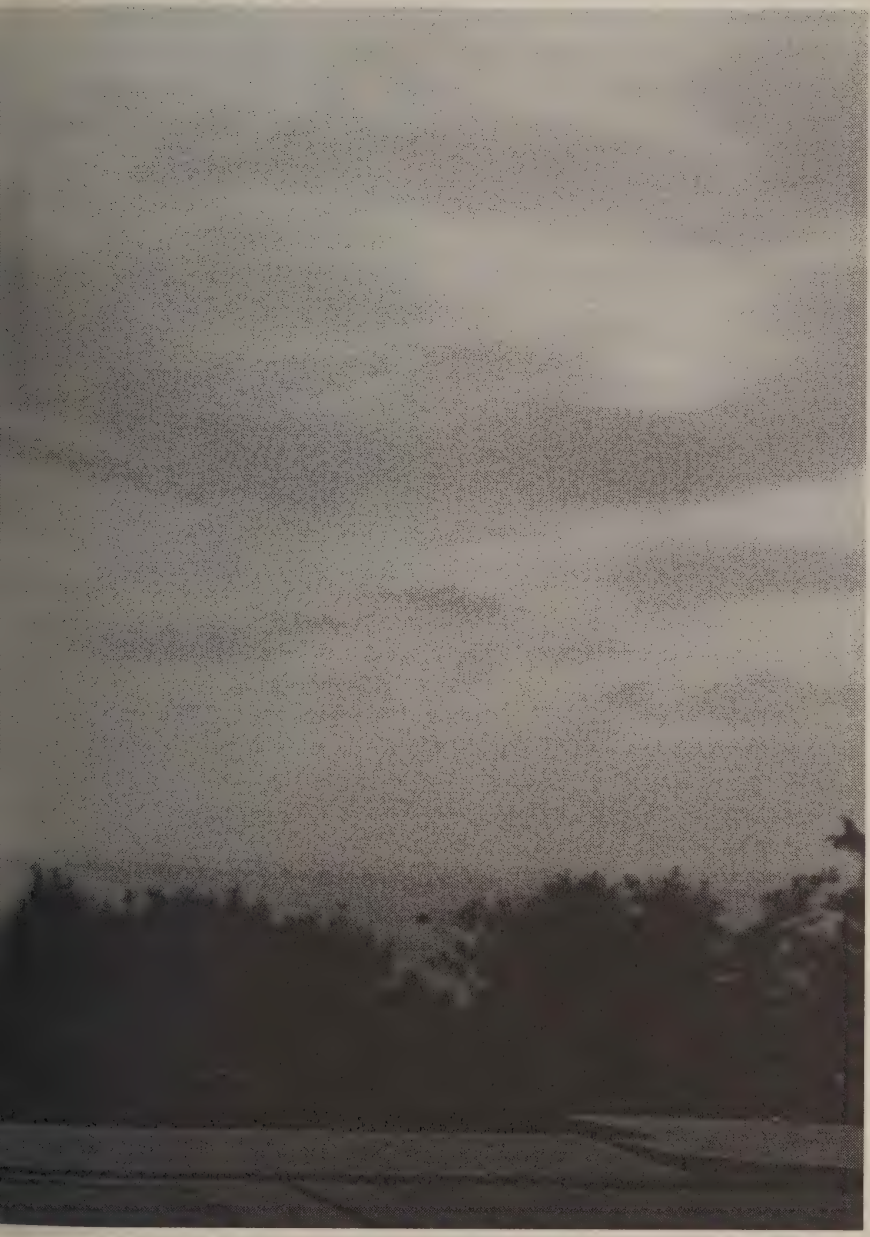
I guess one of the first experiences all of us have as kids is our own weakness against images of power outside of us: our limitations against a limitless horizon outside of us; how puny we seem against the grandeur and the beauty of the world in which we find ourselves. For a child God becomes the all-powerful, the benevolent, the majestic one, as reflected in the images of the outer world. God is the one who makes it all happen. The outer experiences reflect the one behind all that shows power, beauty and goodness. In other words, I "make" God into the image of my own experiences. Since these are apart from myself, I imagine God is also outside of me and my world.

But then I grow into the appreciation of powers that are mine; not just my power, but the might of my nation, the majesty of my country, the honorableness of my fellow countrymen and women. God becomes for me the extension of this power and grandeur on a greater scale, of which I am a part. As all of this world of wonder is nurturing and protecting me and fostering my growth, it is friendly. So also is God. For many Americans God is Power, Prestige, Intelligence, Success, Loveliness, Generosity.

A retreat director at the Jesuit Spirituality Center at Grand Coteau, LA, John Welsh is also associate pastor of the Church of St. Charles, in the same town. He has published many articles on the spiritual life in a number of religious magazines.



Shaping



nage of God

Now then, what happens when my experiences betray all that I've imagined God to be? I experience the contraries of warm-fuzzies; I know failure, I feel suffering, the frustration of limitations, the pain of loss, even the loss of my innocence. The image then cracks, shatters and I am shattered too. And God? That God I had embedded in my imagination is gone, faded away like a vapor. If I'm not an atheist, I'm wise enough not to put my faith in fables, in deceitful images anymore. Other images crowd in and I let them substitute for the faded ones: science, my work, my children, my artistic expression, reading, entertainment, health fads—all I allow to press in on me, so that I don't sense how bereft I feel.

I remember Jesus on the cross speaking out of his seeming abandonment, "My God, my God." Was this the moment when for Jesus the final image of God dropped away, revealing that amazing reality to which Jesus responded. "Into your hands I commend my spirit"?

What can happen (and does happen for a blessed number), is that I begin to discover a new image of God which I never suspected—the weak God; the vulnerable God now enters. It is God who is in the true sense of the word PATIENT: allowing, and not striking back; permitting the injustices, the crimes, the despair, the violence to the innocent that wracks all of God's creatures, the One who lets what is most precious be broken and destroyed. This God shows me what my rational mind never thought God could be, a broken figure, disfigured and wounded. This is the image that dominates my mind, but does it deserve the name GOD?

At least the centurion of Mark's Gospel, looking at the dying Jesus of the crucifixion had the perception to affirm: "Indeed this is God's son."

More to the point about the "weak God" image is that in my own self-abasement on my personal cross I know that united to my very self, to my personal broken image, is THIS God. I discover my God present in my own fragility. Did Paul experience this and express it in the words. "When I am weak, then I am strong"? I remember Jesus on the cross speaking out of his seeming abandonment, "My God, my God." Was this the moment when for Jesus the final image of God

dropped away, revealing that amazing reality to which Jesus responded, "Into your hands I commend my spirit"?

Filled with this image of the broken, weak and suffering God, I may see in everyone who suffers the presence of the One who is strong enough to be weak, who through the medium of suffering unites to persons made in God's own image, and calls all to become in the image of God's son, the Crucified One.

HOW TO FIND GOD: MYSTICS EXPLORE THE PATH TO GOD, *Majestic Film and Video, 5060 Braemoor, Bloomfield Twp, MI 48301, 67 minutes in color, $24.95.*

The three men and two women who speak to us in this thoughtful and compelling video make a persuasive case, through their own histories, that it is indeed possible for us, in this lifetime, to know God: to awaken to the presence of the ultimate reality in ourselves, in others, in nature, in all the situations and circumstances of our daily lives.

Taped at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993, we hear with fascination the stories and experiences of Ma Bhagavati, Brother Wayne Teasdale, a monk who finds holy and common ground in the spiritual paths and practices of both Christianity and Hinduism; Sister Brahma Kumari Jayanti of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization; Robert Thompson, a Baptist pastor; and Brother Anandamoy, a disciple of the Indian sage and holy man, Paramahansa Yogananda.

Brother Wayne Teasdale, a close associate of the late Dom Bede Griffiths, is particularly believable and highly encouraging in his conviction that each of us has the potential to experience the presence of God in our own temple of inner silence, upon whose door we need only knock and it will be opened to us. But we must have an intense desire to go through that door. And we must knock!

Brother Wayne's account of experiencing inwardly, and over-whelmingly, that God loves us unconditionally—despite anything and everything we may do or fail to do—rings true and pulses with the possibility that we too might one day be able to let go of the selfish and grasping demands of our egos sufficiently to actualize our own potential for experiencing God in our lives.

Making a distinction between religion and spirituality, Baptist pastor Robert Thompson—whose account of his experience of oneness with the divine reality is also thoroughly convincing—believes there is no one right way to find God. We each have to find our own path. His own practice changes with his circumstances, needs, and spiritual evolution, but for him the key, always, is to be fully aware in the present moment. Echoing Sister Jayanti and Brother Anandamoy, he emphasizes the need to actively cultivate the spiritual life. Seek, and ye shall find, he tells us, but we must have a real and driving desire to know God and the courage and perseverance to keep knocking on the door.

I highly recommend this inspiring and yes, practical guide to awak-

ening and nourishing your inner spiritual awareness of the presence of God in yourself and all of creation. *PW*

MEDITATIONS ON THE MONK WHO DWELLS IN DAILY LIFE,
by Thomas Moore, HarperCollins, New York city, hardcover, 107 pages, $15.

Another wonderful book from the psychoanalyst and former monk whose books, *Soul Mates* and *Care of the Soul*, returned the word "soul" to the best-seller list after decades of absence. Moore's meditations, which stem from his experience in the Sevite Order between the ages of 13 and 25, suggest ways of fostering the spirit of religious community life in secular, daily life. For example, our homes can be monasteries where "the spirit can be nourished, and the body pleased with arts and pleasures." Architects can add chapels to buildings. Reading can be "spiritual reading." And "monastic humor" can add a dimension of delight to life. Saints are not always serious, he says, noting that when the Dalai Lama and Thomas Merton appeared to be deep in conversation about the finer things of the spiritual life, they were discussing the advantages of a thick belt over a thin cord at the waist. *MFG*

LIVING THE MINDFUL LIFE: A HANDBOOK FOR LIVING IN THE PRESENT MOMENT,
by Charles T.Tart, Shambhala, Boston, 1994, 251 pages, softback, $12.00.

A teacher at the California Institute of Integral Studies, Charles Tart has explored the interface between psychology and spirituality in books such as *Transpersonal Psychology*. His new book combines the wisdom of Buddhism with the teachings of Gurdjieff into a deceptively simple guide to "mindfulness," the state of being spiritually awake — of concentration, focussed attention — which lies at the heart of eastern religious practices. Through dialogues with students, practical exercises, and a natural, conversational style, this "handbook for living in the present moment" is a good place for westerners with little background in eastern spiritualities to begin training the mind.

As Sogyal Rinpoche, the author of The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, suggests in his foreword, Tart shows how mindfulness discipline can result in the transformed thinking and increased happiness and compassion that all religions seek. *MFG*

We welcome your comments. Please address them to the Editor, FiP, 291 Witherspoon St., Princeton, NJ 08542.

I would like to correspond with people in your area about prayer and their love for God and what God has done in their lives.

Lorenzo Taylor; Liberians United Against Drug Abuse
37 Gurley St, Suite 1, P. O. Box 10-0551,
1000 Monrovia 10, Liberia, West Africa

About the article, "For Weak Intercessors." It is bitter-sweet because my mentor, Fr. Ian Riding, died just as the October issue was really beginning to get read. I, and many others, will miss his physical presence greatly. Thank you for giving Ian's prayer wider circulation than it otherwise would have received.

Rev. Michael T. McEwen; Shawnee, OK

Though I have not seen your mission statement, *FiP* speaks volumes: promotes interfaith understanding; fosters inter-religious dialogue; believes in a world united around the values that all religions and spiritualities cherish: truth, justice, wisdom, trust, compassion and the power of love. I especially like: Letters to the Editor, Illuminations, photographs, handy-size format. Each page is a prayerful experience. Many thanks again.

Sr. Vincentuis Zimmer; Sinsinawa, WI

Thank you for the booklet, *Fellowship in Prayer.* May all people be united in prayer for our planet.

Medina Josette; St. Cyr Sur Mer; France

Your mailing flies out to meet the carrier battle group on a Cargo On Delivery. Our COD mail feeds 5,500 shipmates and your articles go to feed the souls of the Hawk's chaplain and staff. Thanks!

LCDR Miles J. Barrett, CHC, USNR; USS Kitty Hawk

I am currently writing a book on psycho-spiritual healing for battered women to be published by Sage Publications. After 15 years of work with battered women, one of my greatest concerns is that those working with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence fail to address the spiritual dimension of the experience.

Laura Crites; Honolulu, HI

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We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1500 words, should be typed, double spaced, on 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 inch paper, on a 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ inch floppy minidisk, 2S/2D, or 2S/HD, or on 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ HD microdisks, in WordPerfect and sent to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542-3227. Please include a brief biography.

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